DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 319 EC 111 304

AUTHOR Catterall, Calvin D.
TITLE The Psychological Rights of the Child.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the World Congress on Future Special Education (First, Stirling, Scotland, June 25 - July 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Advocacy; *Civil Liberties; *General Education; *Psychology; Student Rights

ABSTRACT

The need for and the process of formulating an international declaration of the psychological rights of the child are detailed. The tentative declaration issued by International School Psychology is outlined, efforts for soliciting involvement in the process of improving the declaration are considered, and implications of adopting and implementing the final declaration are discussed. (SBH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

1:176
#13

ED157319

The Psychological Rights of the Child

Calvin D. Catterall

Chairman, International School Psychology Steering Committee

Columbus, Ohio

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.E.C.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Abstract

The need for and the process of formulating an international Declaration of the Rights of the Child is detailed. The process celebrates the International Year of the Child - 1979 which comes 20 years after the original UN adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. International School Psychology has issued a tentative Declaration and invites world wide participation to discuss the need for a clear statement of the child's psychological rights, to formulate the most powerful yet practical statement of these rights, and to explore the implications of such a Declaration for improving world wide services to the child.

EC111804

The Psychological Rights of the Child

The Need for Defining the Psychological Rights of the Child

The International Year of the Child - 1979 (IYC) has been designated by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a time when the world community should center its attention on the child and "reaffirm its concern for the present condition and the future of its children" (The International Year of the Child). One of the major purposes of the year is to "provide an opportunity to emphasize the intellectual, psychological, and social development of children in addition to their physical welfare" (The International Year of the Child) with special attention to be given to the disadvantaged.

IYC comes 20 years after the 1959 unanimous adoption by the United Nation's General Assembly of the broad-based Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1973). It encourages all countries of the world to determine whether or not its most valuable resources, its children, are receiving the basic services which they need to enable them to grow and to participate fully in the development of the society in which they live.

Whereas the earlier Declaration did contain some provisions for the psychological rights of the child, it placed more emphasis on the physical and nutritional needs which are so basic to all further development. Although the entire rights movement has come a long way since 1959 (Gross & Gross, 1977), because of the difficulties in precisely defining them, there still exists a need to carefully define the Psychological Rights of the Child. Few would question that there are a variety of psychological factors which surround the child, for good or for bad, and which affect his or her cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Such a Declaration would be most useful if it: (1) covered the entire psychological domain of development in sufficient detail to enable all countries to evaluate the effectiveness of present programs attempting to provide for these needs and rights. (2) It should be stated with sufficient flexibility, however, so that the need could be provided for with a great deal of adaptability within the context of different cultures and levels of economic development. It should (3) also provide practical goals for the future development of improved levels of services for children as all the countries of the world attempt to improve the psychological climate in which their children and youth will grow. (For an over-all picture of starting IYC projects see: IYC Planning and Implementation Kit and School Psychologists do Make a Difference.)

Initiating the Process of Defining the Psychological Rights

Because of their high level of training in the behavioral sciences and their intense work with school children with all kinds of unmet psychological and academic needs, School Psychologists are in a unique position to provide leadership for defining the Psychological Rights of the Child. Psychologists feel strongly about the need for planning and implementing advocacy programs which provide for and protect these rights and have initiated a campaign which invites the active participation of other professionals, as well as the general public, to produce the strongest Declaration of these rights possible. Because of the need for a universal statement of these rights and because not all educational systems in the world enjoy the advantages of having applied psychological services for their school aged population, the International School Psychology Committee has provided the leadership for an international process designed to ultimately implement a strong rights-advocacy program all over the world.

Because it tends to be difficult to ask people to consider these rights in the abstract, the first phase of the campaign was to formulate a tentative Declaration. This was done to illustrate the problems which one encounters in this process and to provide something for people around the world to react to and improve upon. There were four factors used in the selection of items for inclusion in the tentative statement: (1) An attempt was made to provide right-statements which covered the entire domain of psychological, intellectual development. Although there is obvious overlap with physical and other developmental factors, only those factors which most closely defined the psychological rights of the child were considered. (2) Insofar as possible, the rights are stated in positive terms rather than as an absence of sickness or harm. Earlier efforts to describe mental health had frequently resulted in a list of the absence of mental aberration or mental dysfunction. A right should be a more positive factor which can be programed into the growth and development of both the normal and the atypical child. (3) The conceptual model utilized envisioned age-appropriate dimensions for every level of development rather than a specific developmental task at a given age level. (4) The rights were also chosen and worded as simply yet precisely as possible in order to provide positive guidelines against which various countries could evaluate their existing programs. The more the right-statement met the above criterea, the more use they would be for different cultures to identify new programs that were needed to provide for these rights for all their children.

The Tentative Declaration of the Psychological Rights of the Child

Right I: PERSONAL IDENTITIY The right to have a name, a feeling of identity, to be wanted, and to have a feeling of personal worth regardless of sex or identification with any religious, political, or ethnic group.

Right II: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FROM ADULTS The right to both physical and psychological care and support from his or her parents and/or other adults in the culture, especially during the dependent stages of infancy and childhood.

Right III: PARTICIPATE IN AND LEARN FROM PLAY AND FANTASY The right to the time and opportunity to participate in and learn from play and from other structured and nonstructured activities.

Right IV: FREEDOM FROM FEAR OF PHYSICAL HARM OR ABUSE The right to be protected from all forms of neglect, cruelty, physical hurt, or expoitation and/or the dangers of man-made events such as riots or war.

Right V: ENCOURAGEMENT The right to encouragement from adults and peers to use his or her abilities, to explore new activities, to risk, and to accept, when necessary, the effects of adversity, defeat, and disappointment.

Right VI: SATISFYING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS The right to the opportunity to develop and foster positive, satisfying relationships with other children and adults.

Right VII: GROWING AWARENESS OF STRENGTHS The right to be aware of individual differences, to overcome one's weaknesses, and, at the same time, to become aware of, to be proud of, and to make use of one's strengths in facing the responsibilities of life.

Right VIII: MAKE AGE-APPROPRIATE DECISIONS The right to an opportunity to make appropriate decisions about what he or she can and cannot do, including the right to be thought of as wrong or different by others, in order to assist him or her to become a mature adult.

Right IX: APPROPRIATE EDUCATION The right to obtain the facts necessary to function within their culture and to develop their cognitive potential in an appropriate educational program which helps them to move toward taking a productive place in the culture and, when desirable or necessary, to move freely from one culture to another.

Right X: SPECIALIZED SERVICES The right to specialized physical, educational, and psychological services to meet the child's unique needs in as normal and non-stigmatizing a setting as possible.

Soliciting Involvement in the Process of Improving the Declaration

Starting with Children's Day, June 11, 1978 until Children's Day, June 10, 1979 every effort will be made to initiate and utilize the widest possible interaction to improve on the tentative statement and think through the implications of a strong Declaration for serivces to children. Children's Day was chosen both because it does honor children, on the one hand, and because, on the other, it is celebrated so infrequently throughout the world. Both individuals and groups will be asked to work toward a strong, final Declaration of the Psychological Rights of the Child and to become committed to identifying and implementing new programs of service which insure these rights.

Every effort will be made to involve as large a segment of the total population with expertise or special interests in the child as possible. Many professional groups, each with their own perspective of the child, share the responsibility for guiding the psychological development of children in every culture. Attempts will be made to get involvement from a wide range of educational, psychological, medical, legal, social, and other disciplines to take advantage of their expertise in producing the strongest rights statement possible. In addition to broadening the basis upon which the final Declaration will be formed, it will obviously be necessary to obtain the cooperation of these groups when it comes to the implementation stage of the campaign.

But these rights cannot and should not be defined just by professionals. Because of the importance of an individual's psychological adjustment to help him or her adapt to the society of which they are a part, the public in general and parents in particular must be actively involved in identifying these rights and in implementing programs. These are the people who are in the homes, the churches, and the other institutions in the society which all have a major effect on the psychological climate in which the child is brought up. The expectations of these people serve as "silent tugs of anticipation" on the developing child. While it is true that we want the individual to learn to adjust to his or her society in this tremendously complex world, there must also be an opportunity to help the child gain an increasingly objective view of his or her own culture. They need to understand their own culture but, if desirable or necessary, to also adapt to other cultures or take on some of the best characteristics of another culture for use in their own societal setting.

To fulfill the intent of the International Year of the Child, the discussion process must also reach out and involve people from as wide a range of cultures as possible. The goal of the campaign is, as has been previously stated, to come up with as basic a list of psychological rights as possible that transcend the differences found within different cultures. Again, although different countries may provide for the needs in different ways or on a slightly different time-table for the developing child, the Declaration, if properly stated, should cut across these cultural differences and clearly state universal human rights. It is in this area that all of the international discussion and involvement in the process that can be possibly obtained is needed. Insofar as possible, the rights statement should lead to the identification of needed programs in all countries, no matter what their level of economic development. It is probably safe to say that no country is sufficiently far advanced as to be providing for all of the psychological needs of their children. The task is too complex and the state-of-the-art is too inexact to make it possible for any one culture to be able to provide for all of these rights for all or even for a majority of their children. We have much to learn from each other as we look at the different ways various countries meet these psychological rights. There is frequently a tendency to assume that the way the need is met in our own culture is the "best" way or indeed the "only" way of meeting that need. Through a careful process of observing how different cultures meet these needs a list can be developed of a variety of approaches and techniques for meeting and insuring these basic rights.

The involvement of these individuals and groups will be solicited in a variety of ways. Psychologists and other interested professionals will be asked to become "rights advocates" and to actively seek out the involvement of other professionals and the lay public in the process. The members of the ISP international Liaison Network will be asked to function in this capacity. Information about the process and requests for involvement will be forwarded to the IYC Secretariats to be carried in their newsletters. Personal letters will be written to the Ministers of Education and other selected governmental officials around the world asking them to participate. Presentations will be made at local, national, and international conferences. Traveling Seminars will take the campaign out across the world. Regional Conferences will be held on the subject. Spot announcements will be prepared for use on public-service segments of radio and TV programs. Press releases will be sent to the newspapers and newsletter editors of professional organizations.

Adopting and Implementing the Final Declaration

The reactions from individuals and groups from all over the world will be requested to be returned to ISP by Children's Day, June 10, 1979. These will be collated and used to create the wording of the final Declaration. This statement will be taken up for consideration by the participants of the Third International Colloquium in School Psychology to be held at the University of York in England from July 7-12, 1979. The widest possible attendence at this Colloquium will be solicited to enable wide representation in the process of considering and adopting the final Declaration. Both to insure wide representation from developing countries and to underwrite the expense of the campaign, ISP has started an IYC Psychological Rights Calendar Fund with the goal of collecting $1 for each hour during the IYC. The money will also be used, insofar as possible, for funding specific "rights projects" in the implementation phase.

The final Declaration of the Psychological Rights of the Child will be distributed through the ISP international network. It will also be sent to the Ministers of Education and other governmental officials in all of the major countries of the world and they will be asked to use the statement to evaluate existing programs for their children. The psychologists and other interested professionals who have volunteered to be "rights advocates" will be asked to take the Declaration back to their local setting and again involve people to use the statement to evaluate services. The more effective the process of developing the Declaration has been, i.e., the more involvement of large numbers of lay and professional people working at defining these rights and thinking about strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, the easier the implementation phase will be.

Both the process of formulating the statement and the final Declaration should have the following positive effects in increasing services of a psychological nature to all children throughout the world:

(1) The process should raise the level of awareness to the developmental factors in the psychological domain as well as to the need for establishing programs which meet these psychological needs and protect the child's rights.

(2) The Declaration can be used by all countries to evaluate existing services and will help to identify groups of individuals for whom these psychological needs have not been met.

(3) The heightened emphasis on these psychological rights by professional and lay people should help to increase the level of funding for new programs.

(4) The improved communication at the local, regional, and international level should identify new techniques and programs for meeting these needs.

Although the first part of the implementation phase has been designed to take place during the last half of IYC, it is unlikely that this process will ever be fully completed. The greater the sensitivity to the need for providing programs for meeting psychological needs and protecting the psychological rights of the child, the higher the level of attainment that will be desired. The emphasis of IYC, instead of merely putting on another international conference, will be on specific projects at the national and international level starting in 1979 but permanently raising the level of basic services to children in the world. The Psychological Rights Campaign supports the challenge behind IYC which postulates that "intensified public and governmental awareness of children's needs can lead to concrete action of immense and, above all, lasting benefit to mankind's future---its children" (International Year of the Child). Or, as stated in the Preamble to the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child: "Mankind owes the child the best it has to give" (1973).

References

Declaration of the rights of the child. New York: United Nations Office of Public Information, 1973 (2nd printing).

Gross, B., & Gross, R. The Children's rights movement. New York: Anchor Press, 1977.

International year of the child - 1979. New York: UN Committee for UNICEF, n.d.

IYC planning and implementation kit for psychologists in the schools. Columbus, Ohio: International School Psychology, 1977.

School psychologists do make a difference for children. Columbus, Ohio: International School Psychology, n.d.

Calvin D. Catterall
Chairman, International School Psychology
ISP Secretariat
92 S. Dawson Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43209